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The ROYAL LAW:

OR, THE

GOLDEN RULE

OF

Justice and Charity.

A

SERMON

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

OF THE

Gentlemen, Inhabitants of *London*, and Others, Born within the County of *Worcester*; at St. *Lawrence* Church, *Nov.* 29. 1683.

By *George Boraston*, M. A. Rector of *Hever* in *Kent*.

LONDON,

Printed for *Walter Kettilby* at the *Bishop's-Head* in St. *Paul's* Church-yard. 1684.

To my Worthy Friends the STEWARDS for the present Year.

John Jolliffe,	John Cooper,
Francis Wright,	Thomas Thornbury,
Thomas Twittey,	John Butler,
Thomas Clifford,	William Bacon,
John Harris,	William Jefferyes,
Richard Boraſton,	Walter Bowyer.

Gentlemen,

THIS Sermon Preach'd at your Feaſt, is now at your requeſt made Publick, and preſented as an acknowledgment of your undeſerved Reſpects to me, and your kind Apprehenſions of the Diſcourſe it ſelf: It was not any opinion of the performance (to the weakneſſes of which I am not a little conſcious) that hath made me comply with your deſires to Print what I then Delivered; but an earneſt deſire and hope of Contributing in ſome meaſure to your Love, Veneration, and

Practice of the Duties therein recommended, which ſo nearly concern the Vitals and Honour of Religion, and all the great Intereſts of Mankind; which great ends, if theſe Papers ſhall any ways promote, either in you or others, as you will have no cauſe to repent in deſiring, ſo neither ſhall I, in conſenting to the Publication of them; eſpecially ſince thereby I have the opportunity of Publiſhing to the World how much,

I am, Gentlemen,

Your Humble Servant, and

Affectionate Countryman,

George Boraſton.

MAT.

MATTH. 7. 12.

Therefore all things whatſoever ye would, that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.

TO the performance of all thoſe Duties we owe to God or Man, we have no ſurer Guides, than thoſe natural notions interwoven in our make and conſtitution; and revealed Religion, deſigned by infinite Goodneſs, and Wiſdom, to aſſiſt us againſt thoſe Weakneſſes, and to repair thoſe Ruins, we have contracted, by our vitious Education, our Evil cuſtoms, our Corrupt inclinations, our Imperfect and falſe reaſonings. Between theſe two, there's ſo fair and neceſſary a correſpondence, that it is to all conſidering Men, no ſlender ſupport of their Faith in things revealed, that they are ſo agreeable to the common notices implanted in them by Nature.

And yet in this unhappy age, we have a ſort of Men (Chriſtians I may not call them) who are as fond of Sacrificing Chriſtianity to their Luſts, as ever the Primitive Chriſtians were Zealous to Sacrifice their Luſts to the Laws of Chriſtianity, and their Lives for the Teſtimony of its Truth, and Excellency: Men who deſire to be known by the name of Deiſts, which

is but a disguise for an Atheist, since by it they well enough secure the effects of Atheism, even when they are ashamed to own the principles of it.

Hence it is they not only Quarrel and Affront, but Burlesque, and make Sport with the Holy Scriptures; and if they durst speak out, would call the Gospel a contrivance, and our Lord an Impostor. What else means that cried up assertion; that the Scriptures have no Authority, but what the Civil Power gives them? What else the revival of late of that long since baffled attempt, by which *Apollonius Tyanæus* that Impostor, and Magician, is made a Corrival, if not an Overmatch, to our Saviour, both in Miracles, and Sanctity of Life? And what is the drift, and secret tendency, and design of all this? But under the great respects they would seem to pay to the Law of Nature, to undermine, and justle all revealed Religion out of the World, and to set these two in direct opposition, and contradiction the one to the other; that so they may thereby evacuate the Christian Law, and gain the greater Liberty and Scope in gratifying their Lusts; to which they imagine that to be a severer Enemy, and to lay greater restraints on them, than the Law of Nature does. But by this, as well as other reasons, it is evident, that it is not any strength of reason, or conviction of their understandings, but a kindness to their beloved Lusts, that prevails over their minds, and influences their Faith, and makes them believe those things, which are contradicted by common sense, and plain demonstration.

Philostr. life of Apollon.

For our Blessed Lord never designed to cancel the Laws of Nature, but every where supposes, and owns them, and superstructs Christianity on that Basis and Foundation. He intends not to divest Men, either of

of the principles, or passions belonging to Human Nature, by converting them to Christianity, or to deprive them of such helps, as either right reason affords them, or former Revelation had furnished them with, but to improve, and heighten both.

The Law and the Prophets, were given by God, as a fuller, and plainer description, and delineation of these natural Notions, and Duties which he hath Written and Engraven on our Hearts, which our Lord was so far from effacing or blotting out, that his design was to fill up, and compleatly finish that ruder draught, and σκιαγραφία, and so to furnish us with a perfect Picture of Virtue, in its full proportion; in its lively Colours; in its goodly and beautiful lineaments; that so it might have that effect upon our minds, which *Plato* affirm'd, Virtue drawn to the life would have, if it could be seen, to wit, that it would kindle, and enflame, our affections, and ravish our Hearts with its lovelinesse.

This our Lord affirms of himself toward the beginning of this best of Sermons, St. *Matth.* Chap. 5. 17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil*, that is, by adding other instances, by explaining it more fully, and intelligibly in many things and in more things rescuing it from those corruptions which the false glosses of the Scribes, and Pharisees, had mixt with it.

'Twere easy to instance several Precepts in this Sermon, in which he directs his hearers, and in them all Men, what to do as Men, and as Christians, by advancing Moral and Political Virtues into Spiritual Graces.

Of all which my Text may juſtly challenge the precedency; being the abbreviature of the Law of Nature; the Scope and Deſign of the Law and the Prophets; the moſt comprehenſive Rule, not only comprizing all thoſe Duties, that are uſeful for the conduct, and happineſs of Human Society, but alſo ſufficiently directing us to thoſe Duties, which we owe to God himſelf. For when we conſider his goodneſs towards us, and his kind uſage of us; ſparing us even when we deſerve puniſhment, and treating us with the affections and indearments of a moſt indulgent Parent; ſo that we our ſelves, cannot deſire or wiſh, that he ſhould do to us any otherwiſe, then he has done; his beneficence to us, and the good things he hath prepared for us, exceeding not only our greateſt hopes, but even the conceptions of our Hearts: I ſay, when we conſider this, we cannot but manifeſtly perceive our Obligations to the greateſt Veneration, Gratitude, and Thankſgiving imaginable, to ſo Gracious a Lord; to ſo obliging and adorable a Benefactor; in as much as we our ſelves do juſtly and reaſonably expect ſome proportionable returns, of thoſe, even of thoſe inconſiderable benefits, we have conferred on others. However I ſhall not treat of the words in this utmoſt extent, and latitude; but ſhall conſider them as they are an abſolute rule of our actions and dealings; enjoyning Charity and Juſtice towards all Men, in all conditions, and relations. A leſſon we are ſent to learn no further, and from no other Tutor, than our own breaſts; our own regular and well-governed deſires, what we are willing other Men ſhould do, or not do to us, are a ſufficient direction, and admonition, what we in the like caſes, ought to do, or not do to them: A Law written in ſuch legible Characters, that none can plead Ignorance, and of ſo eaſy a diſpatch, that the

the pleaſure that attends the performance, is a powerful invitation to indear, and a ſufficient reward to encourage our obedience; *Therefore all things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you; do ye even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

In Diſcourſing of this Rule I ſhall obſerve three things.

1. The Law or Rule it ſelf, with ſome of its due proportions and meaſures.

2. The Authority and Sanctions of this Law.

3. Some Irregularities, and deflections from this Rule, by which the purpoſes, and proper uſes of it are perverted.

1. The Royal Law, or Golden Rule to be obſerved in all our Intercourſes, and Commerce, *All things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them.*

A Law which is deduced from that common natural inclination implanted in every one by God himſelf; from whence it is, that every Man doth naturally ſeek his own preſervation, and welfare: That then which is naturally, and ſufficiently grounded in every Man, is laid there as a pattern for the exerciſe of Charity and Juſtice towards all other Men: For by this Native Law, we are obliged to deal with others, as if we had exchanged Perſons, and Circumſtances with them, and they were in ours. But then it muſt be remembred, that this ſelf-love, which is the meaſure of our actings towards others, muſt be regular, and well-grounded in its ſelf; not meaſured by the diſordered appetites of every diſtempered mind, of every Vitiated and Exorbitant Will, which if once admitted, would ſoon introduce all the diſorders, and miſchiefs in the World,

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is the Original of all thoſe Sins, which make the times Perillous, overturns all Governments Sacred and Civil, throws all ranks and degrees of Men into Diſorder and Confuſion, as St. *Paul* obſerved long ago in his Epiſtle to *Tim.* 1 Epiſt. 3. 1-5. The love then we owe to our ſelves, which is the meaſure of our actings to others, muſt be regular, and duly bounded, by rectified reaſon, common good, and to tend to an object really good. To give ſome plain inſtances of what we would, or would not have done to us; for the negative is included in the affirmative. Do we abhor to be impoſed upon with Lyes, Mental Reſervations, and Equivocations? And are not we equally obliged; or can we without great partiality to our ſelves, not acknowledge our obligations, never to hide the true ſenſe of our minds, under any covert of reſerve, and ambiguous meanings? Is it by us reputed diſhoneſty in others, when they perform not their promiſes (thoſe more ſolemn ſecurities of Mens intentions) when they lawfully may or can? And ſhould not we be ever moſt punctual in performing our own? Do we ſtick to charge ſuch with Treachery, as well as Injuſtice, who in truſts committed to them, act not with the ſame fidelity, they would do for themſelves? And ſhould it not oblige us, in all truſts depoſited, to be ſo Faithful and Juſt, as never to abuſe the confidence repoſed in us? Would we have others take no advantage of our ignorance, or neceſſity; ſo as to impoſe upon us either falſe Wares; or cheat us with fallacious weights and ballances? It certainly obliges us, that all fraud and deceit, all unjuſt weights and meaſures ſhould in our commerce be abominable to us, as the Lord ſaith they are to him?

Do we in all our Straits (the common lot of Humanity being liable to ſuch portions of ſorrow) not only

only desire, but lay claim to the compassions and assistances of others? And should not this draw forth our bowels towards others; and move us to pour Wine and Oyl into their Wounds; to allay their Sorrows; to clear up their doubts; to remove their burdens; to Minister as we are able to the necessities of all who stand in need? Do we upon all occasions desire to be treated with sweetness, and affability; that every petty provocation should not raise, and break forth in storms and rage against us; much less settle in rancor and malice; but rather that every one would be easy and forward to accommodation and all good offices? And should not we go and do likewise? Are we tender of our reputation? Are we desirous others should be fair and candid Interpreters of our words and actions? And doth it not concern us to be so far from making havock of our Neighbours reputation; that we should not so much as hearken to, or take up a reproach against it? But should be always ready rather to conceal a real fault, than be forward in divulging those that are supposed only; and by the most charitable construction, and fairest Apologies, endeavour rather to render a great one less, then by sly insinuations, perverse reporting, and malicious suggestions to make a small one great. These are some of the greater strokes, and lines, measures and proportions of this excellent Law, whereby most of the cases that occur, may with ease be determined, if our wills are not more deeply concerned than our understandings; which Rule is not more useful in it self then Venerable and Sacred in its Authority which is my next consideration.

2. The Authority and Sanctions of this Law being, 1. A Law of Nature. 2. A Law of *Moses* and the

the Prophets. 3. A Law of the great Prophet and Lawgiver himſelf.

1. A Law of Nature; a Law taken out of the Notices and Records of Nature, and moſt agreeable to it; providing ſufficiently for the neceſſities and equally advancing the happineſs of Mankind; without which, we were not capable of receiving any Good, or avoiding Evil; but all private entercourſe and publick Societies, muſt ſink into Ruin, and Confuſion. A Law of ſuch prime Evidence, that none can overlook it; of ſuch apparent equity, that none can diſpute it; viſible not only to Philoſophers and Wiſe-Men; but even to little Children; whom Nature it ſelf has taught, in all the petty injuries, and unkind uſages, which are offered to them, to rebuke the offender, with ſuch like words as theſe: You would not be willing I ſhould ſerve you ſo; you would not willingly be ſerved ſo your ſelf. This is their ready and almoſt only protection and defence, to which on all occaſions, they have recourſe: This ſeems to be one of the firſt Efforts, and Sallies that their reaſon makes, and the only Rule to direct and guide their converſation with one another, and to ſecure themſelves from wrong: So open and obvious is the equity of this Rule, that it ſeems to lye uppermoſt in the principles of Human Reaſon.

But then although this is a Law of ſuch apparent evidence, of ſuch undoubted certainty; yet becauſe of the ſhortneſs of Human Reaſon, and the uncertainty of its deductions; and that what ſeems evident to ſome, to others ſeems inconſequent; and that the higheſt pretenders even in Mathematical and ſenſible demonſtration are ſometimes miſerably miſtaken (of which Mr. *Hobs* himſelf is a moſt ſhameful inſtance.)

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it would not be amiſs, if we had ſome infallible Guide, to ſecure us, even from the poſſibility of being miſtaken: This therefore is my next particular propoſed for the ſacredneſs of its Authority and Sanction, it being not the Law of nature only, but

2. The Law, and the Prophets.

This Law is not only recommended to us by right Reaſon, but eſtabliſht alſo by Divine Authority, ſo that there is no poſſibility, either of doubting its Truth and Equity, or eſcaping from its Obligation. For who is there that dares queſtion the reaſonableneſs of that Duty to which Nature it ſelf prompts him, and the God of Nature directs him? What Chains can hold, what Fetters can ſecure that Man, who can break from two ſuch powerful ingagements, who will not ſubmit to two ſuch mighty inducements? To whom can we imagin that, that Man will hearken, who is Deaf to Natures kindly Voyce, and to that of Almighty Power. 'Tis true this Law *in terminis* occurs not either in the Law, or in the Prophets, but there we may find others of the ſame import, of like equivalence with it; and in it are contained all the ſeveral Duties concerning the Juſtice and Charitableneſs of our deportment towards others, which are ſcattered up and down, and are more largely inſiſted on, in the Law and the Prophets. This is the Fountain from whence they all flow, and from whence they may without Tort, or Violence, be fairly deduced; the Center in which they meet, and to which they may with congruity be referred. This Rule contains in it the reaſon, and the equity upon which the numerous, and more particular inſtances of our Duty to others therein preſcribed, is founded. This like an univerſal Soul, does permeate and run through them all, giving Life and Vigor, Force and Authority to them. The ſhort-

neſs of humane Life, and the difficulty and tediouſneſs of Learning, and the intricacy of Knowledge, and the multiplicity of particular Caſes, Exceptions and Reſtrictions, has in all Arts, and Sciences, recommended the uſefulneſs of ſhort Aphoriſms, of compendious Axioms, of little Summaries, and comprehenſive Abridgments, in which are contained the Subſtance, Pith, and Marrow of things; and which are as ſo many Pole-Stars to direct us in all our doubts, as ſo many Clues to guide and extricate us in the Labyrinths of Knowledge, in the variety, and Meanders of Human Affairs: Accordingly our good Lord, our gracious Lawgiver in Condeſcenſion to our infirmity, in Compaſſion to our Weakneſs, has in this Art of Godly living; this Art of Arts: Epitomized our Duty, and compriſed in one eaſy and plain Rule, all thoſe numerous and ſometimes difficult precepts, which are diffuſed, and are more largely commented upon in the Law, and the Prophets; that ſo neither their intricacy might perplex and puzzle our minds, or their numbers burden and oppreſs our memories; and both diſcourage our indeavours, and abate our induſtry. Would we know what the Law, and the Prophets in the ſeveral Periods of the World have delivered; would we behold it with one view, and caſt of the Eye? It is briefly comprehended in this ſaying: To this in all emergent difficulties, in all doubtful perplexities, in new and unforeſeen caſes; when other means of reſolution are dubious, and intricate, or unſatisfactory, or quite fail us, we may have recourſe with the greateſt Eaſe, Security, and Safety: For if we will but conſult, and interrogate our ſelves, what it is we deſire, that others ſhould do to us in the like caſe, we cannot miſs of ſufficient information to direct our practice. Laſtly, As this is the Firſt, ſo it is

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the only Precept, to which our Lord has vouchſafed ſo high an Honour, has given ſo great a Character, that it is the Law and the Prophets. For that of loveing our Neighbour as our Selves, and the like, to which this high Character is alſo aſſigned, is not different from it, but of the ſame purport, and equivalence with it: Only this before us, ſeems by far to have the preeminence of that; For, *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy Self*, not only looks more imperative, and commanding without any reaſon annexed, or implied in it, to invite our love; but alſo by requiring it in ſo high a degree, and at firſt ſight in ſo ſeemingly impoſſible a meaſure, that it ſeems rather to deter us, and to render the Duty unpracticable. Whereas this by carrying ſuch apparent equity in its fore-head; by making our ſelves Judges in the caſe; and appealing to the natural ſentiments of our minds, does recommend it ſelf to our practice, and does ingage our hearts with the choiceſt endearments.

But then Thirdly, Leſt any may imagine that this comprehenſive rule, that contains in it the Law and the Prophets, concerns thoſe only that lived under that diſpenſation; and that the men in the Text, are of that narrow extent, and ſignification, that our Neighbour was under the Law; our Lord adopts this into his own Religion, and makes the Precept as Catholick as his Church; Nay, the truth is, it is of a much wider extent, and we have the warrant of his own expoſition (in the Parable of the Samaritan) to extend it, in a ſort to all men whatever, with whom we have any thing to do, or who live within the compaſs, and reach of our Charity. Accordingly his bleſſed Apoſtles do preſs this Duty on us, in this unlimited, and univerſal extent, exhorting us as we have opportunity, to do good to all men, to diſtribute liberally; to be

Patient and Gentle; to abound in love; to make Supplications, Interceſſions, and Thankſgiving for all Men. To which conſideration we may add, that this command of Love and Charity one towards another, is that command, which our bleſſed Lord did ſelect, and chooſe out, above all the reſt; every where thereto expreſſing a dear affection, a ſingular regard; claiming in it a ſpecial Intereſt, a peculiar Propriety; recommending, and preſſing the practice of it to his Diſciples, with an extraordinary concern, with urgent importunity, with unuſual Zeal; exemplifying, and outdoing the command in the whole tenor, and courſe of his life; having loved us not only beyond all former example, but alſo beyond all imagination and knowledge [ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγαπῶ χριστοῦ, Eph. 3. 19.] urging, and enforcing our love to one another, from the conſideration of this exceſſivelove of his to us: Which that we may be in ſome meaſure able to perform and exerciſe, he hath given us his Holy Spirit to excite, and ſtir up, to ſhed abroad that Love in our Hearts, to multiply, and make it perfect in us. Which, what effect that loving Spirit hath upon us, how it is we behave, and demean our ſelves in the performance of this peculiar command; He in a ſignal manner takes ſpecial notice of, and peculiar inſpection, awarding to us our final Doom and Sentence, either of everlaſting happineſs or miſery, according as we have either conſcientiouſly, or negligently behaved our ſelves therein. So that if his commands, and example, if the aſſiſtance and aids of his Spirit; if the greateſt rewards to the obſervers, and ſevereſt denuntiations to the diſobedient, import any thing, the Authority is moſt Sacred, and the Sanctions moſt weighty. And though it is ſo Sacred, in its Authority; though in its ſelf ſo neceſſary, to the welfare of mankind,

mankind, yet how miſerably it is wreſted and perverted, will appear in the conſideration of,

Thirdly; Some irregularities, and deflections from this Golden Rule, whereby the right purpoſes, and proper uſes of it, are perverted. Some willingly claim an intereſt in the firſt part of the Rule, but reject the latter; would have all do well to them, but themſelves not obliged to do good to any. Not unlike ſome narrow Factions in Religion, who take all acts of Grace done to them, as their due, and therefore can never be thankful for any; but when power is gotten into their hands, can breath forth nothing but ruin, Root and Branch, to all that diſſent from them. Such is the Iſſue of that lewd Doctrine, Dominion is founded in Grace.

Others live and act as if the Rule run, *All whatſoever ye would, that do ye*; theſe do not bend their Wills to the Rule, but bow the Rule to their Wills; as if our Primitive State were indeed what Mr. *Hobbs* fancied it, a State of War in which every one hath right to all things; that Power only gives right, and is the meaſure of Juſt and Honeſt; and that Men were to live on the Land, as Fiſhes do in the Sea, the greater to devour the leſs, and more helpleſs fry. Some mutilate the Rule, or clog it with ſuch a Proviſo our great Lawgiver never intended, they put out, *As ye would they ſhould do unto you*; and read it, *as ye are done unto*, though never ſo unjuſtly and uncharitably: They act not by the meaſures of juſt, and regular appetites, but of other Mens Evil demeanor towards them, contrary to the true temper of the Law, and Spirit of the Goſpel, which is ſo far from allowing the leaſt revenge in caſe of injury, and wrong received, that on the contrary, it not only commands us to forgive the Offender, but alſo to oblige him; to return him love for hatred; Bleſſing for Curſing;

Curſing; good Offices for deſpiteful uſage; Prayers and Interceſſions for Mockery and Perſecution, St. *Matt.* 5. 44.

This is the Nobleſt, the Beſt, the only revenge allowed us; beſt in regard of our Enemy, whom by this means, if by any, we ſhall either convert, and gain, or mollify and ſweeten; beſt for our ſelves, who by ſo doing ſhall become the Sons of God, and reſemble our Heavenly Father, in his exceſſive goodneſs, in his exuberant Beneficence, in his unparallelled Philanthropy. Again ſome leave out πάντα ὅσα, all things whatſoever, and put in τίνα, ſome things, and to ſome ſort of perſons. In leſſer things, they are contented to be exactly juſt, and merciful, but then they are not uniform in greater; when ſome conſiderable damage may be avoided, or advantage acquired, they muſt be excuſed, be the means never ſo indirect; the advantages of the end, and the great emolument, and the goodly purchaſe they expect and hope for, will according to their opinion, and Goſpel, be ſufficient to Sanctify the means, be they never ſo unjuſt and uncharitable. And as their Juſtice and Charity is thus narrowed, and crampt to ſome things, ſo alſo their huckſtering kind of Love is confined to ſome Men, that is, Men of their own Party. Some Mens Religion infects their minds with ſuch a ſour leaven, that they look upon the reſt of Mankind as reprobates; and will hardly allow their Chriſtian Friends or Governors, if they are not of their way and Faction, a room in their Prayers. This Partiality hath been the bane of the Churches Peace, the chiefeſt cauſe of moſt of thoſe Schiſms, and Differences, under which Chriſtendom hath from time to time, and doth ſtill groan; this hath thruſt the Flock of Chriſt into a far narrower compaſs than ever the Donatiſts did, concluding the Communion

munion of Saints only to their Sect or Party. And no wonder this uncouth humor hath got into their civil commerce and dealings, who if they do not think it their intereſt, to Trade only with ſuch, yet think Mercy and Juſtice owing only to them: So that a Phariſaical Corban ſhall evacuate thoſe Duties towards all other Men; and as they are apt to reckon it no Duty to exerciſe Juſtice and Mercy to them, ſo they are no leſs forward to account it no Sin, to defraud and over-reach them. Among this latter ſort of Men, if we may judge of them by their practice, I fear ſome reckon the King himſelf, whoſe cuſtoms they dare ſo frequently ſteal, without any conſcience of the greatneſs of the Sin: Though the King hath as undoubted a right to them, as any Subject hath to the eſtate he poſſeſſes; yea, though our Lord himſelf, for whoſe commands and example they profeſs ſo great a reverence, was at the charges of a Miracle, to pay *Cæſar* his Cuſtom; from whence we may ſafely infer, he would never have given his Vote to diſenable *Cæſar* to pay his debts.

But let ſuch Men be aſſured the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, though of infinite Vertue and Value to penitents, will never ſerve their turn, nor anſwer for this, or any other act of Injuſtice, without reſtitution, according to their ability. You have heard what this Law is with ſome of the principal meaſures and proportions of it; the ſacredneſs of its Authority; and the miſerable perverting of it to ill purpoſes from its proper uſes.

What now remains, but that as we eſteem and look upon the Creed, as a ſhort Summary, comprehending the Fundamental Articles of our Religion, in reference to our Faith; in like manner, we take this Royal Law, as a brief *Compendium* for the direction of our Practice? That we by no means allow our ſelves in any courſe or action,

action, which this Golden Rule disallows; that we be at all times so far from invading other Mens Rights, whether in their Lives, Liberties, Reputation, or Estates, that we rather account it our happiness, as it is our Duty, to be sensible of their Distresses, and stoop to their Necessities, when we see any Afflicted; to gratifie them with our Beneficence, when we see them in any kind or degree to stand in need of it; to bear patiently with their offences, if they forget themselves so far as to do us any; to be so far from offering any Injury, that we will not return the greatest, unless it be with Prayers and Intercessions, and all kind Offices; never to use our power to oppress, or skill to deceive any that deal with us, or who repose any Trust in us; to be more afraid to take away another Mans Goods, Life, or Reputation [which is dearer than Life] unjustly, than to lose our own.

And give me leave [Worthy Countrymen] to hope, that to speak Truth; to perform your Promises; to be faithful to your Trusts; to act without Disguise; to be sincere and upright in all your Dealings; to do the utmost good, and bear the greatest Injuries withour Retaliation, are things so Sacred in themselves, and by you as such esteemed and looked upon; that you will rather suffer the loss of any thing, than be false to any of your Obligations. Yea give me leave to believe, your Meeting this Day to be no less than a living Comment upon my Text; that you are transcribing into your Practice the Characters of Primitive Christianity, when Truth and Honesty, when Goodness and Charity, were not only acknowledg'd Duties, but in fashion also; that, as I perswade my self, you are exactly just in all your Intercourses, so the design of your Feast, is not so much any Ostentation of your Riches, Plenty, and Magnificence, as a Testimony to

God

God of your thankfulneſs for what you enjoy; not for exceſs and luxury, but for the promoting of this Law of Love and Friendſhip among your ſelves; and which is Godlike too, and the beſt return you can make to God, to make others partake of your Plenty, to change Conditions and Circumſtances with them, who want what you enjoy, by the real exerciſes of your Charity to them. But if any among us can act contrary to this Royal Law of Juſtice and Charity, let them

1. Recollect with what Conviction, and ſhame many Heathens will riſe up in Judgment, and condemn ſuch Chriſtians.

Shall *Marcus Antoninus* the Heathen Emperour, and *Philoſopher*, propoſe to his own breaſt that Queſtion, What is that we muſt beſtow moſt of our Care and Diligence upon, and anſwer himſelf, even upon this only, that our Minds and Wills be Juſt; that our Actions be Charitable; that our Speech never be Deceitful? And ſhall Chriſtians be negligent and careleſs of the Juſtice of their Minds and Wills; of the Charity of their Actions, and the Integrity of their Words? Shall an Heathen have ſo great reverence for Truth, that he would not allow a Lye to be ſpoken, no not in jeſt? And ſhall Chriſtians be lovers and makers of Lyes; and Lying among them, be made an Holy Artifice? Shall an Heathen tell us that he is the worſt of Villains, who will deceive that Man, who had been ſafe, if he had not truſted him? And ſhall not only private, but publick truſt, and even for pious uſes too, be loſt careleſly, be embezel'd prodigally, or converted to their own uſes by Chriſtians? Shall the Clerks of the Market in Heathen *Rome* enact, that whoſoever ſold any Commodities, ſhould diſcover their faults to the Buyer; that falſe Weights and Wares ſhould be caſt

into the River, and mulcts, or corporal punishments should be inflicted on the Offendor? And are Deceits and Frauds, false Weights and Ballances, Mysteries of Iniquity, not only practis'd, but continued in notwithstanding the rebukes of their Consciences? Shall an Heathen cause his Servants continually to attend him with great Sums of Mony, that by the readiness of his relief, he might not leave any appearance of the least denyal, by the delay? Shall the same Heathen frequently cover those he saw in poor and ragged Garments, with his own? And shall Christians see others who partake of the same Nature and Redemption with them, naked and not clothe them, hungry and thirsty, and not feed, and give them to drink? Shall an Heathen when that Man was in his power, who maliciously had put out one of his Eyes, be so far from revenging the Injury; that besides the courteous usage of him, he never gave over his friendly Counsels, till he had made him in love with Philosophy, and had instructed him in the Principles and Rules of the happiest Life? Shall another Heathen [as the same Author, *Origen* in his last Book against *Celsus* relates] when one said to him, let me perish if I do thee not a mischief, answer him, and let me perish if I do not my utmost to make thee my friend: And shall the Lives and Language of Christians be full of animosities and sourness, ill offices, revenge and hatred? Shall an Heathen Prince reverence Christ and Christianity, for this saying in my Text, shall he cause it to be engraven on his Plate, written on the Walls of his Palace, and Courts of Judicature? Shall He sometimes in his own Person, at other times by an Officer, when Malefactors were punish'd, ingeminate this expostulation, while the punishment was inflicted; Wouldst thou have this done to thy self, and thy own possessions, which

which thou haſt done to another; thereby to convince them the more fully of the Iniquity of their doings, and the Equity of their ſufferings? And ſhall Chriſtians be ſo far from making uſe of ſuch appoſite means of imprinting this excellent Rule in their own and others memories; of recalling it to their minds; of declaring their high eſteem and value they have for it; that on the contrary, either through Sloth or Negligence, they ſeldom or never think of it, or elſe through vitious practice, endeavor to efface and obliterate it out of their minds? Once more, ſhall the *Lex Julia* in Heathen *Rome*, allot the ſame puniſhment to Sacriledge and Treaſon; and *Marcellus* a great Stateſman, lay it down for an undoubted Rule, that Subjects may wiſh for good Princes, but ought to bear with any? And ſhall theſe who ſeem to own Chriſt under the greateſt demonſtration of ſelf denyal, count Sacriledge no Sin, and a deſign of riſing againſt their Soveraign no Treaſon; and be ſo far from bearing with Evil Governors, that they Libel, Defame, Perſecute, and thirſt after the Blood of the beſt? With what face can any Chriſtian appear before the Righteous Judge, who hath greater aids and obligations, and doth leſs; more Grace, and yet lives worſe than an Heathen? As not an ordinary Confuſion will cover their faces, ſo an ordinary Hell will not ſerve the turn of ſuch prodigious Chriſtians. Eſpecially

2. When they ſhall remember that the Name of Chriſt is more diſhonor'd by ſuch pretenders, than by thoſe who declare open hoſtility againſt him. Did a Man deſign to Stabb his Religion deeply, and do as great deſpite as malice it ſelf could contrive to the Founder of it, he could not take a more effectual way to do both, than to make high pretences to tenderneſs

of Conſcience in leſſer things, and ſhew great Zeal for God and the myſteries of Religion, and yet be Knaviſh, Unjuſt and Uncharitable in his dealings. I doubt not to ſay that few conſiderations have more contributed to the Irreligion and Debaucheries of the Age, than the known prevarications of many, who have made great profeſſions of Religion, but yet have lived in the practice of Sacriledge, Sedition, Rebellion and Perjury, taking Oaths contrary to their former, and breaking all, as they ſerved, or diſſerved their intereſt. Without doubt Orthodox manners are the beſt demonſtration, as well as the greateſt Honor of Orthodox belief; Men know not what we believe, but they know what we do, and by that will judge what we believe, and what we are; ſtrangers and ſtanders by are eaſily tempted to believe that there is no Religion, or that Religion is nothing, when they ſee that the moſt Zealous pretenders to it are not only careleſs in obſerving, but living even in open and direct contradiction to its Precepts. May I add,

3. That the practiſe of theſe Duties is the ſureſt evidence of our being good Men, approved of God, Favourites of Heaven, Citizens of *Sion*; for theſe Duties being regularly performed include Faith in God as their great root and principle, are thoſe Graces which as they do derive from God, ſo they do moſt aſſimilate and recommend us to him who is moſt juſt and merciful: And what better evidence can there be of a Mans being good, than being moſt like to, and approved by him who is perfectly ſo? And as it would be an evidence that we are good Men, ſo it would make us peaceable Chriſtians, for

4. It would have a mighty tendency [which all good

good Men Wiſh and Pray for] to allay our heats about notional Doctrines and Circumſtantial things, which ſerve only to diſtinguiſh Clans and Sects, and expoſe all that is dear to us, to thoſe, whom we cannot gratify more [could we ſee it] than by our diviſions. But theſe Duties, as they are ſuch in which all are agreed, ſo were we as careful in the conſcientious practice of them, we ſhould have both leſs liſt, or leſs leiſure to find faults, and hunt after ſcruples, or raiſe needleſs, and unprofitable diſputes; or if any did ariſe, they would be manag'd ſo amicably, that the Peace of the Church ſhould not be diſturb'd by them. And as it would make us Peaceable Chriſtians, ſo it would alſo

Laſtly, Render us Loyal and Obedient Subjects: Inſtead of turning Politicians, and Stateſmen, medling with things above our Sphere, and Plotting with our heads; we ſhould ſtudy to be quiet, and to do our own buſineſs, and work with our hands. We ſhould be as forward to render *Cæſar* his due, as we are to demand our own; we ſhould be as tender of invading or incroaching on his undoubted Prerogative, as we are ſcrupulous of preſerving our own unqueſtionable priviledges; we ſhould obey our Superiors, with the ſame willing ſubjection, with which we deſire our Children, and Servants ſhould obey us. We ſhould have their perſons in great Veneration, and Honor for their high Office and Character which they bear; we ſhould put a fair and candid conſtruction on all their actions, and make a juſt allowance for the unavoidable miſcarriages they are liable to; conſidering the arduous, and intricate affairs, which they are to manage; the ſubtle intrigues to which they are expoſed; the unforeſeen difficulties that ariſe; the uncertainty of Human affairs; the many and great tentations, with

with which they are assaulted; we should never Quarrel, much less grow Turbulent, and Seditious upon the account of small miscarriages which are incident to the best of Governments.

To say no more, this would verify and make good that Propheſy concerning the peaceable and happy condition of Christs Kingdom, that the Lyon should lie down with the Lamb, that we should beat our Swords into Plough-shares, and our Spears into pruning Hooks, that our Nation should not lift up Sword against our Nation, nor should we learn War any more.

This World would be as quiet an Habitation as it can possibly be, and it would make us as happy in our selves, Dutiful to our Superiors, helpful and propitious one to another in all our converse, as we can desire or wish; It would be the best Human means to recover this Sinful Nation, and oppressed Church, from the Miseries Spiritual and Civil, under which they groan: However let what will be our lot in this World, it will undoubtedly secure us an interest in a better, which God of his infinite mercy, for the sake of his Son, through the assistance of his good Spirit, grant us. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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